

Interview with former LTJG Leonard Julius, MSC, USN, crewmember of USS *Oriskany* during the *Forrestal* fire of 29 July 1967. Interviewed by Jan K. Herman, Historian, Navy Medical Department, 19 July 2005.

Where are you originally from?

The Bronx.

Really? I'm a New Yorker myself.

Where?

Babylon. Do you know where that is?

Yes, I do. Long Island.

So you were born in the Bronx. Where did you go to school?

I went to two high schools: Bronx High School of Science. I quit there and went to Evander Childs High School. But I never finished. I joined the Navy instead in 1958.

What prompted you to join the Navy?

I lived in Throggs Neck and it was sort of a nautical area. Navy people had boats and it just seemed like the logical thing to do. I was never certain as to why I joined but it worked out pretty well.

Where did you go to boot camp?

Great Lakes. While I was there I had a very fortunate thing happen. I got pneumonia.

You say fortunate?

It turned out to be fortunate. I spent time in the hospital and then got measles on top of that. So I spent about 2 weeks in the hospital and got to see what those guys did. It seemed like it was a nice thing. And I like to work with people so when I went for my classification I asked to become a corpsman. He said, "We're short of electronics technicians," this and that. But finally he recommended me to be a corpsman. So I went to corps school at Great Lakes.

What was corps school like for you?

I enjoyed the heck out of it. It was 16 weeks back then. And I was probably the youngest guy in the class at 17. I made a lot of friends there. It was not hard to learn what they were teaching and I thought the instructors were pretty good. It was just a lot of fun.

What was your first duty station after corps school?

Naval Hospital Chelsea, Mass, which no longer exists. And then I got sent down to the shipyard dispensary in Boston. That was terrific. That was as good as any place I've ever been.

What was so good about it?

It was a small place and you could have real responsibility. I was a third class by then. I was in charge of a few people. And Boston was a great place to be and my hours were more regular at the dispensary than they had been at the hospital where the hours were long. While I was there, I made 150 ambulance runs both in the shipyard and taking people to the hospital.

How long were you there?

Until '61. I was almost 3 years at the dispensary. The senior medical officer was a doctor named J.B. Barger. The MSC was George Ramsey. From there I tried to go to the Fleet Marine Force. I went all the way down to Norfolk to talk to the detailer who paid me absolutely no attention. It was just awful. Two of us had reenlisted at the same time and drove there to what was called Enlisted Personnel Distribution Office Atlantic. There was a Chief LeGrange there. And he said there were no billets in the FMF. As it happens, the Marine Corps had just increased considerably in size. He said to me and my friend, "You are gonna go to cruisers out of Norfolk, both of you." And I wasn't too thrilled about that. The next thing, my orders came in for Naval Hospital Guam.

It couldn't have been more different. It was shore duty and half a world away. It also seemed exciting. I was there for almost 3 years. I was a second class by that time and worked in the outpatient clinic. I also went back to get married to an old high school sweetheart.

Where did you go after Guam?

I went to MAT (Medical Administrative Technique) in San Diego. I did well there and took the first exam for MSC there and also did well. Then I was transferred to the Naval Hospital San Diego. I worked for CDR Harris. He was like a godfather to me. I took the professional exam there. I remember climbing a mountain near San Diego with a teenage kid who lived across the street. It was a very hot day and I got a bit sick from the heat. My wife said, "You missed the most important day of your life."

I said, "Did somebody call?"

She said, "Everybody called." That was the day I learned I was going to be commissioned. It was really exciting. Then CDR Harris called and took me to the officers club, which was the first time I had ever been there.

At San Diego, I worked with the comptroller.

You were already commissioned at this time?

No. At that time, Comptroller and Supply were in the same building but they were two different divisions. I became the assistant supply officer as a first class.

From there I went to Newport for officer indoctrination. There I met all my compatriots. That was 1965. There were 80 commissioned that year and the first 30 went to Bethesda for their indoctrination. Then the next 35 of us went to Newport. And the last group also went to Bethesda. The living conditions at Newport were lousy but the socialization was good.

Then I went to Justice School and found I really had a taste for that. I think I was second in a class of 40.

Why did they send you to Justice School?

I'm not really sure. But I was always glad they did because I did a lot of court martial work later on. It was extremely enlightening and it was longer than the officer indoctrination. It opened up whole new avenues in my mind. Wherever I went, I was always the legal "expert." At hospitals, it was usually the MSCs that handled the discipline, investigations, and court martial kind of stuff.

Then I went to Naval Hospital Oakland. I worked in supply for awhile. Then I went to Personnel and worked for an MSC named Carl Morris. I liked working with people again.

Then it was time to go to sea or the FMF. I wanted to go to sea rather than the FMF but it wasn't because of Vietnam. I just had never been to sea before in all my years in the Navy. I got the USS *Oriskany*. That was May of 1967. I stayed there almost exactly 2 years. We went on deployment to Vietnam for a 7- or 8-month cruise.

Where did you pick the ship up at that time?

In Alameda. I had almost been 10 years in the Navy by then.

What was your reaction when you saw that big carrier?

Oh, I loved it. I just ate it up. I was really excited about it. It turned out to be a hard, hard cruise but I had a great job. For me Medical was the nexus of the whole ship. I was a mustang but was only 25 years old. My credentials as a mustang were fine. The people who got things done on the ship were mostly mustangs. I easily had an in with them. I got to know people in the wing and got to know VA-163 best because my boss--a medical officer--was a pilot and flew with 163. At the time there were 13 Naval Aviators-Flight Surgeons in the Navy and he was one of them.

What was his name?

Al Adeeb.

I've been trying to get in touch with him.

He's an anesthesiologist in Jacksonville, FL. We saw one another at a ship's reunion back about 5 years ago. He's a very interesting man. He actually flew two hops a day. So sick bay was sort of turned over to me. And then if anything went wrong, he'd chew my ass out. I used to go to the department head meetings. I had an excellent time there and knew almost everybody on the ship.

You got there after the big fire.

The big fire was in September of '66. I got there in May of '67.

Were they still talking about it while you were there?

Oh, yes. It was a living, breathing thing to the guys who were still there. It was the fire this and the fire that. They had lost 44 people. The senior medical officer was killed as was one of the flight surgeons. It was a pretty big impact on the corpsmen and sick bay.

Who was the senior medical officer?

I'm not sure. It was an Irish name. I never met him. The lore of that event was passed on until we got the *Forrestal* fire.

I've been trying to find anyone on the *Oriskany* who might remember the fire but haven't been very successful.

Joe Winningham was the MSC who I relieved. He was injured in the fire, not seriously, but he was emotionally scarred pretty bad. One of the corpsmen who rescued several people died not that long ago. He never got any kind of recognition for what he did.

So you went with the ship to what was called "Yankee Station."

Right.

What do you remember about getting out there, and what was daily life like once you were on station?

It all revolved around the air wing in those days. We were launching almost every day. They were called Alpha Strikes, when they launched almost every plane on the ship. Sometimes we did that three times a day. Sick bay was fully manned as long as the flight deck was operating. That made for some pretty long hours. The kids on the flight deck were really killing themselves.

The junior corpsman bunkroom was actually off of a passageway. I had four corpsmen at a time who worked the flight deck. And every now and then you'd find some guy who was so tired he couldn't make it to his bed and he'd be sleeping in the corpsman's quarters. And there were always more people on board than there were beds. So people were hot bunking.

It was hard work but I was never so occupied that I couldn't get around the ship. And I got to know almost everyone on the ship.

A carrier environment has always been very dangerous.

Very dangerous.

I'm sure you saw your share of accidents.

Unbelievable things. One day, we heard a "Boom!" The next thing they bring this sailor down to sick bay with the top of his head gone. He had been inflating an aircraft tire. You are supposed to put them into a cage in case they blow out. In case the tire blows out, the cage will keep the rubber from flying around. He didn't and hooked up the full pressure from one of the wrong lines and blew the tire up.

We also had a crewman sucked into a jet engine. Someone pulled him out but he didn't survive. In the OR the surgeon split him open from top to bottom. The surgeon and the assistant medical officer did a tremendous job on him but he died in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive for lack of attention.

So they medevaced him from the ship.

We kept him on the ship for 3 or 4 days and he was doing pretty well. We medevaced him to the hospital in Subic Bay. Then they sent him right into Danang, which seemed an odd thing to do. Danang was a bigger and better hospital but it didn't make a lot of sense to me to send him into a war zone.

Needless to say, the big deal was the *Forrestal* fire. What recollections do you have about that?

We had had a few cases of diarrhea and we thought it was some curdled milk. I went out of sick bay with the sanitation tech and we had just gone to two or three coffee messes and I laid down the law to the guys. We were on a deck above the hangar deck. I saw everyone heading toward the elevator. And there was the *Forrestal* in the distance with a great big black cloud hanging over it. I said to the sanitation tech, "I think we're gonna be busy today."

When I got down to sick bay, I also noted that the senior medical officer had taken two flight surgeons, himself, and half the corpsmen over to the *Forrestal*.

You could see black smoke?

Yes. It looked like a mushroom cloud.

How close were you to *Forrestal*?

Maybe 4 or 5 miles at the most. It was obvious that something had gone horribly wrong. We went to sick bay and tried to get things organized. Normally, when we brought in a patient who was badly injured, the surgeon would see him in the x-ray room and take x-rays to help his diagnosis. Well, at the time, the surgeon, LCDR Will Williams, had a patient with a badly fractured femur. I looked in and said, "You've got to stop."

"Don't get in my way. I'm busy here," he said. He was trying to decide how he was going to operate on the sailor.

None of us were prepared for what happened. I then pulled him by the belt and said, "Will, you've got to take a look at what's going on out here."

Then he saw the patients lined up and said, "Oh, my God! I had better get into the OR."

We didn't have another doctor. We had dentists, corpsmen and dental techs. Of the four doctors on the ship, three had already gone over to the *Forrestal*. During the course of that day, we had 70 or 80 patients brought to us with the worst injuries I had ever seen in my life.

How were they bringing them from *Forrestal*?

By helicopter. It just seemed to go on forever.

What time did these patients start arriving?

I'm not sure but probably within less than an hour from the time I saw the explosion. It may have been as soon as 20 minutes to a half an hour. And sick bay just started filling up.

What kind of injuries are we talking about?

I'm talking about a femur broken so bad that the leg was bent over double. I'm talking about a guy who was burned over 90 percent of his body with second and third degree burns. That's the fellow who I catheterized to relieve his discomfort.

Tell me about that incident.

I used to work in a urology ward when I was a corpsman, and I never completely lost my touch for patient care. One of the corpsmen said, "Mr. Julius. You told me you worked in a urology ward. This patient is really bad off but his only complaint is that he can't urinate."

At that time we only had one doctor and two dentists. This patient was so badly burned, he was just black. You couldn't tell whether he was a black man, a white man, or whatever. He was disfigured beyond recognition. He didn't have a lot of pain because most of his nerves were destroyed.

I had as much urological nursing skill as anybody. So I got a catheter and passed it, which was not easy, and he was able to void. He was very grateful. He said, "Thank you very much. You really helped me a lot." Then he said, "I know I'm gonna die." And, of course, he was right.

And I said, "Well, nobody ever knows when he's going to die. I may go before you."

He then said, "Oh, no. You don't have to worry. I'll be all right. I haven't done anything I'm ashamed of."

And I just left the man and went someplace quiet and just cried. That was one of the most significant encounters of my life. And he did die but not on the ship. He was just easy--not a man who was afraid to die. It was unbelievable.

So you remember that above everything else.

Oh, yes. I doubt I would ever be able to forget that. The rest of it is almost a blur. When the doctors came back from the *Forrestal*, there was still work to do. There was one doctor who could be freed up a little while. I said, "Let's put together a little record for each one of these patients so when they get wherever they're going, people will know what's already happened and it will improve their chances of survival."

When people left that ship, every single one of them had a record. I thought that was an amazing thing. When they got to the hospital ship . . . and I can't remember whether it was the *Sanctuary* or the *Repose*.

Moving them off the ship was somewhat difficult. Normally, we manhandled patients from sick bay up a ladder to the hangar deck and over to the deck edge elevator, then up to the flight deck where they were put aboard helicopters. This time it was different with all these patients who were so bad off with IVS running, etc. So I called the weapons officer, who I knew quite well. I told him I wanted to use the bomb elevator which was just aft of the sick bay. He said, "You know you can't use that for transporting people."

I said, "This is an unusual circumstance. It's an emergency. How about forgetting the rules for awhile."

He said, "Okay. But I want you to understand that the door at the top of the elevator does not open automatically. It's possible to squash someone against that door if we screw it up."

So I said, "Well, don't screw it up. And I'll go on the first lift."

We were communicating with the bridge at the time telling them we wanted to move these people off the ship. And finally they told us it was time to go. So I went with a corpsman and the first patient in a Stokes stretcher up on the elevator.

It was a black night and I couldn't see whether the top of the elevator was open or not. It was very unnerving. But we got up on the flight deck and started moving. Then all of a sudden they said, "Hold on! They're evacuating the *Forrestal*. We did all this while they were evacuating 132 dead bodies from the *Forrestal* to the hospital ship.

Was the hospital ship standing by at this point?

Yes. We had all been steaming to meet somewhere in Tonkin Gulf. But it was infuriating. The problem was that the average person doesn't understand that when someone's dead, nothing else matters at the time. We wanted to get these very injured people to the hospital ship. I bet it was an hour that I stood on that flight deck with this man who was in pain. And we had other patients strung out ready to move. It was infuriating. To the best of my knowledge, there weren't that many critically injured people left on the *Forrestal*. We already had them because it was our docs who had gone over there and sent them to us. Anyone who was badly injured came to the *Oriskany*. And they did evacuate all the bodies first. In my heart of hearts, I never forgave the line for that.

Something else. The senior medical officer of the *Oriskany* had taken some medical talent to the *Forrestal* without telling our commanding officer. The skipper called down to sick bay. Now the skipper wanted to talk to the medical officer. And he meant the senior medical officer. I got on the phone and said, "I can guarantee you. . ." And I didn't want to be the one to

tell the skipper that the doctors were gone. "I can guarantee you that all the medical officers are working their butts off right now. And it's difficult even for me to come to the phone because we're busy."

Then he said, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes sir. You can make sure the load of patients get spread evenly between us and the other aircraft carrier (which I think was the *Intrepid*). That will help.

And in a typical line officer mode, he said, "What's the matter? You can't handle it?"

I said, "Captain, we can handle anything but we do it differently when we have this number of patients. You asked me what you can do for us and this is what you can do for us."

By this time I realized he knew the medical officer was gone but didn't let on. He said, "Julius, you're a very loyal officer. I wish all my officers were like you." Then he hung up. Later I found out that we saw 70 or more patients and the *Intrepid* had seen 11. I don't think anyone at that time had any idea what was going on. But it worked out pretty well. Let me tell you. It was a big day.

It took a long time to fight the fire on the *Forrestal*. And you were getting patients as they were fighting the fire.

Absolutely. Remember the fire was in different places on the ship. In some ways we were emotionally better equipped to deal with the burn patients than they were. My nucleus of corpsmen had been on the *Oriskany* for our fire and were somewhat skilled at this. I'll give you an example. One of my corpsman, HM2 [Kenneth] Skaggs, arrived in sick bay on the *Forrestal*. There the sick bay was pretty much untouched by the fire. When he got there everybody was at their battle stations so there weren't too many people in sick bay. When he got to the pharmacy, all the cabinets were locked. They had padlocks on them. He said to whomever was there, "Why is everything locked up? You're gonna have patients here any minute."

"We can't. Mr. so and so would kill me if I opened these cabinets."

"Give me that axe. Mr. Julius would kill me if I didn't."

That's the fellow I kept in contact with. He worked for me again at Bethesda. He's a good man.

Is Skaggs still around?

I don't know. I haven't heard from him since Bethesda. I know he got out.

Is there anybody else you can remember?

Yes. There was an OR tech named Carl Forch. He was fantastic and a real hero that day. There were others. I had a great big Mexican-American supply man. He could barely speak English. He was from Southern California and his name was Alcantar. I used to call him Al Cantor. When the thing started I said, "Al. This is what I want. Whenever someone reaches their hand out for something, they're gonna have it. You get your storerooms open and you move stuff back and forth. And you don't have any help. You are the only one who will be doing this and you will keep supplies moving."

And he did. Not a whimper, not a word for hours and hours, back and forth, back and forth. As soon as he saw something was low, he replaced it.

I had a dental tech. You could see he was really scared. He didn't have the training or the makeup for doing this kind of work. I said, "Your job today is to clean this place up

constantly. I don't want patients, corpsmen, and doctors tripping over empty boxes and this and that."

He was very relieved and said, "Yes, sir." I'll tell you, that place was immaculate. Nothing ever hit the floor. My only really problem was figuring out what people should be doing to suit their specialization. People really got to work when you got them in the right spot.

Could you give me some idea as to what special treatment you were providing? You were seeing every kind of injury imaginable--burns, traumatic amputations, etc.

And most of that happened in the OR because it wasn't all that long before the other doctors came back and went into the OR with the surgeon. It was really something. We were set up like a trauma hospital. More corpsmen went in to assist them.

Much of the treatment happened outside the OR. We were giving people morphine, palliative treatments, and working to stop bleeding. But by then, much of that had already happened. Many of the people who were coming in already had the bleeding attended to and we were just trying to keep them comfortable until they could get into the OR.

I remember two patients in particular. There were two kids who were blown off the *Forrestal*, picked up by a destroyer, then picked up by a helicopter, and finally brought over to my ship covered with oil. You couldn't tell whether they were hurt or not. Once we cleaned them up, we found they were hardly hurt at all. These two guys then said, "We've got to go back to our ship."

I said, "It's over. You're done. You've had enough for today." Soon after I left them, they sneaked out and went back to their ship. These were teenagers!! Amazing!

After things began to slow down, how long did it take for you get back into some kind of routine?

Of course, we didn't fly that day other than the helicopters. I'm not sure. I do remember this. We had had a lot of fires on the *Oriskany*--little ones. And my fire station was the scene of the fires.

It was sometime late at night. I had gone back to my stateroom and was taking a shower. And then the fire alarm went off. "Fire! Fire!" I said to myself, "I don't know if I can do this." I dried off, threw on my flight suit, which was somewhat fire-retardant. I got there and there was the XO and the fire marshal. It was just a tiny electrical but it really scared everyone. And as I was going down to it, I noticed that all the 5-gallon cans of fire foam were gone. They had gone over to the *Forrestal*. There was nothing. If we had had a big fire then, we'd have sunk.

So the word fire was enough to strike terror at that point?

It struck terror in me, I'll tell you. But I also remembered that one of the ways of getting killed was not going to where you were supposed to be. And that's what happened in the original *Oriskany* fire. Most of the officers who were killed were with the wing. They had no required place to go for fire call. They stayed in their little rooms, some in their bunks, and they burned to death. I always got moving and always wore shoes. The most important thing was to have shoes because if the deck is hot you can't get over it barefoot.

The strangest thing that happened and I still think it was something out of a dream. The next day, all the medical department officers were sitting in sick bay and in walks this doctor. He was being transited to one of the destroyers. We said to him, "How long have you been here?"

He said, "Oh, a day and a half."
I said, "Didn't you hear something going on?"
"No. I just figured I'd stay in my room."

This was a physician who was completely unaware of what had happened?

To this day, I don't know if I dreamt that or it actually happened because we couldn't believe it. The five of us said, "You'd better go!" The whole thing was offensive to us. He had to know something was going on. We figured that he was going to make a hard transition to Navy life.

I know you were down below working on patients. Could you see the *Forrestal* during any of the time this tragedy was playing itself out?

The only time I ever saw the *Forrestal* again was once when I was on the flight deck watching their evacuation and waiting to get my patients off. I was friends with the MSC on the *Forrestal*. His name was Russell Barnhill. When we pulled into Subic a couple of days later the *Forrestal* was already there and I went over to see how my friend was. In fact, I took him out to the officers club. He was actually in pretty rough shape. It's one thing to be treating people who are really bad off when you're not in any physical danger yourself. And that was my situation. It's another to be trying to do that and you know that the roof might cave in on you at any minute. And that was his situation. We had been friends at Newport. In fact, he gave me a piece of the *Forrestal*'s flight deck.

After the *Forrestal* fire, the officers in the medical department got together and we were going to write up commendations for people. The SMO told me he was writing me up for a Navy Commendation award and I suggested we write up several of the enlisted people also. He told me that the ship's awards board had said that only officers would get medals. I said, "How can I take a medal when all I did was to get these enlisted men to do their job and they did a fantastic job?" Some of them had been in the OR for 10 hours at a time.

He said, "That's the way it is." The highest award the corpsmen could get was a Seventh Fleet Commendation letter. So that's what I took. In those day a Navy Com was a pretty big deal.

When you went over there at Subic, what did you see?

I wasn't really looking for the damage; I was looking to see if my friend was all right. And I don't remember the condition of the ship. I either blanked it out or whatever. It was a hulk and it wasn't easy getting around. But I didn't pay too much attention to that. I was mainly interested in seeing how he and the others had done. I've always been a people-oriented person. My knowledge of what happened on *Forrestal* comes more from what people told me, from TV programs I've seen, and the book [*Sailors to the End*].

After this event, you went on with your Navy career. Where did you go from *Oriskany*?

I went back to Naval Hospital Oakland for about a year. I really wanted to get back to the East Coast because I hadn't been there for a long time. The detailer took advantage of me. He said, "You're a New Yorker, aren't you?"

I said, "Well, yes."

He said, "We've got a billet in the 3rd Naval District, which is right down in lower Manhattan." I took it. I relieved a guy named Larry Biasiadny. He is one of the most interesting characters.

I know Larry Biasiadny. He was here at the Bureau when I first came here.
Really?

I think he lives out in Cleveland or Detroit, somewhere in that area.

He has a photographic memory. I relieved him in New York and was with him for a week or two. He made such an impression on me. Later on, I'd call him in Washington and I'd say, "I've got some friends coming in from Connecticut. Where would be a nice place to take them to eat?"

He go here, here, there, there. And the waiter's name is so and so. And they were always good recommendations. I'm usually wary of people's advice but Larry never gave me a bum steer.

It was a good job but, frankly, I didn't really like being in New York. I was living up in Mahopac about 50 miles up and traveling in every day. It was difficult.

Then I got orders to the Naval School of Health Administration at Bethesda. I moved my family down there. We found a nice place for them to live and I stayed in New York for about 4 or 5 weeks before joining them in Rockville, MD.

How long were at the school in Bethesda?

I was there about 8 or 9 months. I got to liking Maryland and wanted to stay. I became involved with a youth group in the church I was going to. I was transferred to NMTI [Naval Medical Training Institute] which became HSETC and I worked for Dr. J. William Cox.

I knew Admiral Cox.

And before him, I worked for Dr. Rupnik. Dr. Rupnik had been a corpsman at one time.

Where did you go after Bethesda?

I really wanted to leave. I didn't like the value system in the Washington suburbs for bringing up my kids. It was all money. I didn't like what was going on and I wanted to go to New England. I went to the Bureau to see my detailer and told him it was time to go. I had already been in the Washington area for 3 years. I ended up at the hospital in New London at the submarine base. That's where I spent the rest of my time in the Navy. I really enjoyed it even though I became a commuter. I had my family in Vermont and I'd go home on the weekends. On Friday afternoon, you didn't want to stand in front of the door. There were a lot of commuters. If you stood in front of that door, you could get killed.

When did you retire?

February 28, 1978.

And what did you do after that?

I had actually met a fellow who had a consulting firm. He was doing training rather than situational consulting. He wanted to branch out into situational consulting. While I was still on active duty I took leave and went to a steel company in Pennsylvania. Dr. Jack Baker, who was my former commanding officer, was the medical officer there. His boss, who was a vice

president of the firm, wanted a study done on his medical department with a little bit of cachet to it so he could get what he wanted from the company. We sent him a 20-page study and made about \$5,000.

I was eventually elected to the school board in Warren, Vermont. Then I quit the school board so I could work for the school district. I was a business manager for the district. It was called Washington West Supervisory Union. It was in Duxbury, VT. I lived in Warren at the time.

So you got into the education business.

Yes. I'd been at the Training Institute for 3 years so I always considered myself a little bit of a teacher. My son was going to a ski racing academy in Fayston, VT, and it was costing a lot of money. So I shifted over to that to be the administrator because I got free tuition and a small salary.

And I went back to college. You know that when I left the Navy my entire formal education had ended at the 11th grade?

At some point, you ended up in North Carolina. How did that happen?

I went to a private school to work, then I went back to college to finish my degree. From there I started a masters program. Then they didn't have a public administration program or a health care administration at the University of Vermont. I went into an MBA program, and got a job as an administrator at a community mental health center, which was more in my line. And I stayed there for 3 years.

Then I was selling computer systems for about 3 years. After that I worked for the state as a senior purchasing agent. That was a good job. I retired from there in '95 and came down here. I became the administrator of a small free clinic in Morehead City. Then I went to work part-time in this auto parts store--Auto Zone. I'm kind of a night manager there. I've been doing that since '98.

So you're sort of retired, but not really.

I'm part-time now. I worked there full-time for 6 years. But now I'm part-time.

I've got a last question for you. The *Forrestal* incident happened way back in 1967, 38 years ago. Do you ever think about it much anymore or about your Navy career?

A lot of guys get out of the Navy because they're angry and dissatisfied. I got out because there were other things I wanted to do and I wanted to live in Vermont.

I would have no life if it weren't for the Navy. I was a high school dropout. And look at the things I the Navy did for me. I was the youngest mustang in the Navy when I was commissioned at age 24. I was a high school dropout and had never walked inside a college. You couldn't do that nowadays. And they gave me the opportunity to go to school part-time and then full-time.

The *Forrestal* fire comes up when I meet somebody like you who is interested in that. It came up when the fellow called me who was writing the book. It comes up when I run into someone I was on the ship with. I still belong to a group of junior officers who get together periodically from the ship. I'm still a retired naval officer. And my checks still say lieutenant commander, MSC, USN.

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